

What do you want to make?

This academic year I would like to make a short psychological horror film. In this I would like to incorporate the visual language I developed last year. Night vision recordings combined with digital infrared photos. There are 2 main characters: a guy who is a film student and a girl who is a painter. The location consists of the girl's bedroom with drawings and mirrors.

The most important themes for the film are: trauma, memory, intimacy, power structures and violation. The character's motives and personalities will not become completely clear just facets of them. I like to keep this aspect a bit open so the viewer has space to project their own views and feelings onto these characters. In the dialogue it becomes clear that these 2 characters are longtime friends.

In this short the horror elements are more related to hidden violence.

How do you plan to make it?

For the footage I will use my night vision video camera and infrared photo camera. The locations will be a bedroom and a beach.

For the writing part I will write a script that leaves space for improvisational segments within set frameworks. Parts of the script will consist of transcriptions from earlier recordings for the short.

I want to combine conventional methods of filmmaking with more progressive methods and my own vision on filmmaking.

This is definitely also rooted in my ambition to undermine traditional filmmaking hierarchies. Rooted in this is the idea of manipulation - the filmmaker of the viewer, the director of the actors. This is also why I see this project as a collaboration between 3 people: Me, Cem and Oana, they as actors are given the space to improvise and mold the characters to their own liking. Besides that, they also have a say in the directing, filming and art direction.

This undermining of hierarchy is also a theme of the plot as when you expect to see the recording of violence towards the end, you won't get to see what you expect.

You are not just watching a film; you will feel more like an active participant. Since I am not sure if breaking these film rules is enough to make the viewer an active participant, I will also dedicate a part of my research to interactive storytelling and gamification. However, I will not use these techniques in my short film, because I am not experienced with them. I would like to develop this story into an interactive experience after I graduate, so this project does not end with the short film that I will produce.

Over the course of the film another recording is brought up in the dialogue and is shown near the end of the short. Only the beginning of the recording is shown and then it cuts to memories and flashbacks of the girl. This part will be quite surreal in its aesthetics.

The camera has an active role and is not hidden. The guy that acts in the film is also the one that films. Or at least gives the illusion that he is the one filming.

The sound will probably be infrasound and maybe a soundtrack / soundscape.

What is your timetable?

Timetable:

- Moodboard
- Storyboard
- Portraits

oct/nov

- Film
- Script

oct/feb

For the film and script, I will work with prototypes to see what works and go back and forth between filming and writing. This process starts in October and I want to be done with the filming and script in February.

- Edit
- Produce the sound
- Producer?

mar/apr

Why do you want to make it?

Because I am interested in the philosophy of ethics, I want to make a film that presents questions about right and wrong which are also difficult for myself to answer. These questions mainly relate to themes of trust, power dynamics, violence and protection.

Examples of a few of these questions:

- What are our hypocrisies on violence related to the media and the images we ingest?
- When is violence entertaining and when does it become problematic?
- How is it possible to mess with the expectations of an audience that anticipates violence?
- What makes a film violent in its essence?
- In which cases do we need to show violence, is it when it portrays the truth?

I would like to make a film that focuses for a big part on the aftermath of a violent encounter instead of on the act itself. This is because I am more interested in the psychology and state of trauma and how this also affects the people that are close to the person who experiences it. Most importantly, I want to make a film that engages beyond shock value. So, I would like to produce a horror short that does not engage with the shocking: it will not depict graphic violence. A slow build-up and a dragging feeling of dread fits more into what I envision with this project.

This is more the psychological aim but I also want to play with the grammar of filmmaking. Since I am interested in horror and not in feel-good movies I want to elaborate on the presentation of violence and fear in this genre. I want to be critical towards the viewer and myself as an aspiring filmmaker. What is the structure behind the psychology of a film?

Who can help you and how?

Cem will be co-director and actor in the film. My friend Oana plays the girl, she is a very talented artist and I will also use her drawings in the film. I tend to like films that use inexperienced actors because it has the potential to feel more genuine and real. This combined with the handheld night vision camera brings a certain rawness that reminds me of home videos.

Feedback will be very important, especially from the viewers who do not participate in the project. I can only test this by showing my work to other people. (Not just fellow people in the field, also family, friends and people that look with a different eye).

Relation to previous practice?

In my previous practice I developed the visual language that I will continue to use now. My work explores the psychological and aesthetic areas of the uncanny. The projects explore the model-photographer and camera-photographer-model relationship in an engaging manner. The psychology of that interaction is very interesting to me. This results in the experimentality and the feeling of probing, aiming for a compelling effect on the viewer.

Next to that I already researched the boundaries between camera, operator and model. Power structures have been a prominent subject of my practice. For example, my short Look at the Video. In this short the subtitles are the director and demand the model to move, the choreography becomes more extreme in its demands towards the end of the film.

I think I'm taking my practice a step further by making a more narrative work. My obsessions on power structures, boundaries and empathy were already clear in my previous practice they will just have a more defined form now.

Relation to a larger context / References?

I think the context and references could be related to the questioning of (sexual) violence but also to artists that play with the medium of film and question it.

Films like It Follows, Funny Games, Irréversible and Der Mirror are a few examples of this.

It Follows deals with themes of sexuality and assault in a sensitive and frightening manner. It confronts our ability to trust another human being, as there is no monster in this horror film but only human like entities that follow the protagonist.

Funny Games blurs the line between fiction and reality and highlights the act of observation. It also questions our hunger for violence as viewers in a very confrontational manner.

Irréversible by Gaspar Noé portrays rape in its most sickening and violent form. An interesting fact is that Monica Bellucci, who portrays the victim, was the director for this scene. Gaspar Noé let both of the actors improvise for the rape scene.

Der Mirror by Keren Cytter researches the grammar of film in her practice. Her narratives are fragmented and the characters self-aware.

Conclusion

Long story short, I think the relationship and boundaries between director and model are in a way similar to boundaries between interpersonal relationships. When looking becomes gazing and transforms to voyeurism, there is a perversion and violation added to it, that is reminiscent of sexual violation.



